

Final Judgment

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the final judgment and the role of sin and selfishness in preventing a utopia, highlighting the need for personal transformation and humility before God.

Duration: 1:06:22

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:13, Revelation 1:1, Revelation 4:11

Topics: "Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not avoiding the harsh realities of life and the dangers that exist. He argues that it is not loving to entertain people with pleasing words, but rather to confront them with the truth. The preacher then focuses on the concept of a utopia and explains that it is impossible to achieve as long as evil and sin exist. He highlights the need to eliminate evil, represented by Satan, in order to create a new creation of righteousness. The sermon concludes with a discussion of the judgment of Satan and the promise of extraordinary things after death.

Transcript

Revelation 20, Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who was the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed.

After these things, he must be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus, and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead, and on their hand.

And they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power. But they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for

the war. The number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.

And fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. And books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life.

And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them. And they were judged, every one of them, according to their deeds.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The text that we read in the book of Revelation, I'm well aware that even the reading of that text would be scandalous to a person who did not know Christ. I'm also aware that even in the context of what is called American Christianity, the mere reading of that text would be scandalous. Some people would be offended.

Even to give the simplest exposition of the text would cause people to get up and walk out of the church. And so it's with great sensitivity that we want to look at this text, and yet we must realize something. It is a part of the Scriptures.

I sometimes will hear TV evangelists and things that are quite famous. When they're put on the hot seat, they'll say things like, when they're asked why they never speak on judgment or hell, they will often say, well, it's because I just want to teach the words of Jesus. And that demonstrates one of two things.

One, either they do not know the words of Jesus, and by their ignorance, they're disqualified as a minister of the Gospel. Or two, they're lying. And in that, they're disqualified.

Do you realize that if you delve into biblical theology, which is studying through the Scriptures book by book, you go through the first five books of the law and you almost see no reference whatsoever to hell. You go into the Psalms. Very slight.

Almost nothing. The wisdom literature. All of it.

You go into the prophets, and there's very little, if anything, known about hell. When we look at the epistles of the apostles, we really do not glean a lot of information with regard to hell. The person who informed us about hell was Jesus Christ.

In His teaching in the four Gospels, where His teachings are recorded, is where we are taught about hell. It's almost that it's such an extraordinary doctrine that God left it up to no one else but His Son. And then when we get to the book of Revelation, never forget, don't think of this as an epistle, but it is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This again is by His command. This is His doing. And so we're going to look at this.

We're going to look at this text. And we're going to look at it verse by verse. And we're going to see some of the things that are taught here, beginning in verse 11.

Now, I'm going to do something that maybe would be very awkward, even offensive. But I'm going to speak to those who in their heart know that they do not know Christ. I'm speaking to the whole congregation, of course, but I'm going to make references in which I say, you.

And when I say you, I'm referring to those who do not know our Lord. Now, if today as I'm standing here, I'm having quite a bit of physical difficulty, it may just be from the Lord also a manifestation of the anguish of the soul. You see, there's nothing more useless on the planet than a liberal preacher.

A man who says that he believes in whatever of Christianity, but doesn't believe what the Bible says. Because to believe what the Bible says brings joy, of course, but I want you to know it can also bring an overwhelming sadness. There are realities being dealt with here that either you're going to just dismiss them like many so-called ministers would do and turn the church into something like six flags over Jesus of entertainment and just social and just feel good.

But you see, there are realities here. Death. Life.

Eternity. And we can't simply just mark these off because they're disturbing. That's why Jesus came, because this is disturbing.

Life is disturbing. We have today a cult of youth in which because of media, you know, all the movies, everything put before you are by and large just young, beautiful people. But even young, beautiful people grow old and die.

And with death, if Jesus Christ is not a liar, with death comes some very extraordinary things. Now, look in verse 11. It says the first word in the New American Standard would be then.

And the first word in the Greek text is actually a literal and. Then is appropriate because it's representing a transition. But it's referring back to what's happened already.

And what's happened already? We have the judgment of Satan. Now, what we need to realize is that when everyone talks about a utopia, you know, for the most part, it's a philosophical or political utopia in our world today. You know, we're trying to build something.

I believe there's a film out now called Tomorrowland or something in which we see a utopia that kind of caves in on itself. You can't have a utopia if you have evil. And I always find it amazing that some of the loudest proclaimers of political utopia are divorced several times.

So if you can't have peace in your own family, how are you going to have peace politically? You see, there's the problem. It's just on different scales. If you look at a very corrupt corporate man who's causing the starvation of millions or something, and you judge that, know that you do the same thing, just different degrees.

You see, you're never going to have a utopia as long as there's evil. And the Bible teaches not only an evil, but a personal also evil, which is called the devil, Satan, the accuser. And he has to be eliminated.

He has to be removed from creation before you can have a new creation in which dwells righteousness. You see, man really has only one problem, and it's sin. Like if I were to teach fathers today, because I

understand it's Father's Day or something like that, I would say your greatest problem as a man is sin.

It's not that you're not self-realized or self-fulfilled. No, your problem is sin and it's selfishness. You get that sin removed, your wife will have a completely different husband.

You see, it's the same way with creation. You've got to remove evil. Now, so we have this transition of the devil's been removed, but now we come in from verses 11-15.

I'm going to say something very scandalous. Again, I'm talking to those outside of Christ. After removing the evil that is the devil, in order to have a new heaven and a new earth, there's one more evil that has to be removed.

It's you. I've heard people say sometimes, you know, well, if you ever find a perfect church, don't join it, because when you join it, it won't be perfect anymore. Why are they saying that? Because of moral flaws in you.

You see, it's not enough just to open up the gates of a new world and allow all the people in, because it'll turn into a hell in the same way that this one has. And again, let me just go back, you know, there are people starving to death, right now as I speak, but there's enough food to feed them all. Why is that? Evil, selfishness, greed.

We find another planet that's just like this one, totally unspoiled, and we all go move there. Give it about a day. It'll be spoiled and there'll be wars.

You see, it's not just build a utopia. It's change a man, a woman, so that they can actually enter into that utopia without defiling it. That's the issue.

And that's what Christianity is about. You hear, there's so many funny things that go on, you know, when I look at things logically or rationally, or look at the newspaper, or read Newsweek or something, I find all these gaps in logic, you know. Let me give you an example.

When you see a person who's done something horrific, who's to blame for that? Society. But there's a logic gap there. I mean, they don't teach logic in schools anymore.

They really ought to try to do that. Because they're kind of putting the cart before the horse. Society's made up of individuals.

You've got circular reasoning at best. The fact is, the man's messed up because the man's messed up. Now, there may be social influences that are corrupting him, but at the same time, those social influences come from other people.

The problem is evil. Or when, you know, your child goes awry, goes astray. What is it a parent usually says? My child fell in with the wrong group.

How come they never think that their child actually was the wrong group? Do you see that? And so it's evil. And I'm going to tell you something. Unless your heart is changed in this life, and then gradually makes a progression to greater godliness, and then is completely transformed at the coming of Christ, then you're a utopia ruiner.

You destroy. And so, you see, in order that there be a new heaven and a new earth, if you're not going to come to Christ, if you're not going to be changed, if you will not be reconciled to God, you must be removed. One of my favorite stories, and it's ironic, it's one of my favorite stories, because it's one of the, if not the first, it's the turning in all of European literature when they actually have a story about Christmas, and God's not mentioned in it at all.

It's the first demonstration of secular Christmas. It's called the Christmas Carol. Ebenezer Scrooge.

There's no God, there's no angels, there's ghosts, it's spiritism. But something happens there, and something of a secular conversion, I guess you could call it. But there's something amazing.

When one of the ghosts, I think the final one is maybe the ghost of Christmas future, is taking Ebenezer around, they come upon a group of men who are basically throwing a party. They're rejoicing, they're drinking, they're laughing, they're celebrating. And Ebenezer wants to know what are they celebrating, and who is this wretched individual that has died, that is so wretched that because he's dead, everyone is celebrating.

Who is it? Who is this pitiful soul? And then Ebenezer finds out it's him. That the town is celebrating because he's dead. Now I'm going to take this pretty far.

Imagine you come across a conversation between God and the elect angels. And they're talking about a person that must be removed before there can be a new heaven and a new earth. Imagine the terror of discovering that that person is you.

I told you it would be scandalous. And I told you it would be dealing with reality. See, so many times so much is said about Christianity just kind of in a fog.

You can't see clearly. This is trying to cut away the fog and show you, hey, this is real. This is real.

I know of times when sons have gone wayward and began to corrupt all the other children in the family, and they have to be disowned. They have to be sent forth from the house. That's happened throughout history.

And as terrible as it is, sometimes it's necessary. So imagine you must be disowned from all of creation so that you might go to a place where there is no place found for you so that God can renew the world. You see, the problem is you.

Now let's go on. He says after that, he said, Then I saw a great white throne. Literally, I saw a throne.

Great white comes afterwards, but I saw a throne. Now, what I want you to know about this throne is that it's God's throne. It's almost as though we wouldn't want to put an indefinite article, a throne.

We would almost want to put the throne, but the context proves it to be true. This is the throne of thrones. All other thrones.

Although we must respect men in authority and men today that sit on so-called thrones, we must respect them, know this. They're nothing more than little children sitting on paper mache thrones with little tin crowns on their head. That's all they are.

And if you ever come to a point where you fear some politician or some authority, get a better view of God. You won't fear them so much. You'll pity them.

Because here is a throne. I wish that all believers, including myself, would get a greater picture of this throne because it would be such an encouragement. You know, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

And above Him stood the seraphs, and each having six wings, with two they covered their face, with two they covered their feet, and with two they did fly. And one cried unto the other, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.

And the post of the door moved at the voice of Him who cried, and the house was filled with smoke. What's that all about? It's all about this. In the year that King Uzziah died.

You see, Uzziah was Isaiah's friend, I guess you could say, if there ever was a friendship between a king and a prophet. And he died. And Isaiah needed to see a throne.

He didn't need a group hug. He didn't need other men to come and just whisper something in his ear to make him feel better about himself. No, he needed to see God.

And that strengthened him to the point where he could tell the truth to the point where, as tradition says, he was sawn in two with a wooden saw, and as they cut him open, he cried out the Word of God. How was he able to do that? He saw a throne. He saw something of the One who sat upon it.

And according to John 12, the One who sat upon it was the Son. He saw the Son. As a believer, you need to see a throne.

As an unbeliever, you need to see a throne and realize you'll be judged by the One who sits upon that throne. Now, the throne is also a tribunal bench. It is a judgment throne.

And I want to just go through a few verses. In 2 Corinthians 5, 10, it's called the judgment seat of Christ. In Romans 14, 10, it's called the judgment seat of God.

Now, there's no contradiction there as we'll see later if we have time. For God will judge the world through Christ. God and Christ and the Spirit are one.

What I want you to carry away from this is simply this. Christ, when He walked on this earth, He stood before the bema, the judgment seat of Pilate. But one day, Pilate and all other men will stand before the bema, our judgment seat of Christ.

All of you will. All of you. I will.

You will stand there. Alone, you will stand. Now, He says great is the throne.

It's the Greek word megas, megalodon. It means great. It is great.

Now, I just wrote out some words here. It's great in appearance. It's great in dimensions.

It's dimensions. It's mass and weight. See, when we use the word glory, toxa, the real idea there is weight.

In the same way when you say something is weighty, it means it has substance. It's so important. And this is His throne.

It is weightier than anything. There's nothing like it. Also, in its compass and extent.

You remember the verse I quoted from Isaiah 6 or the several verses that I quoted? The train of His robe filled the temple. You know what the idea is there? That there's not one place that His sovereignty does not touch. Wherever you are, you're standing upon His robe.

That's why Abraham Kuyper, the great Dutch Reformed theologian worthy of reading, he told a group of men one time, you need to understand something. When Jesus Christ comes back, He's going to stretch forth His hand and He's going to say, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine. Because it's all His.

Now, it's also great in strength and rank and eminence and esteem and virtue, authority, power. Everything you could mention, it's great. Infinitely great.

Incomparably great. We're not talking relationally here. We're talking greatness as an essence.

As an attribute. There's nothing to compare to this throne. Now, also I want you to note, look what it says.

Then I saw a great throne in Him who sat upon it. Now here's the thing that I want you to see. He's also going to tell us later He sees the mass of humanity.

Now think about this, brothers. He sees everybody from Adam to the last man, woman on the planet. And yet when He looks at these two things, the throne and this mass of humanity, the mass of humanity seems like a little, small, little thing.

Almost as though He doesn't even notice them. Now do you see that? That's how great this throne is. And Isaiah warns us about that, doesn't he? He says that the nations are nothing before Him and they're like a drop from a bucket.

Also I want you to see that, look, Christianity, if you can call it that, American contemporary Christianity, man is at the very center of it. All eyes on me. That's not real.

That's not real. It's not real. It's like a child playing pirate that lives in the Midwest and has never seen an ocean.

It's infantile. You're not even noticed when someone looks at not just you and God, but all and everyone like you all together and God, and they don't even notice you. If that bothers you, that tells me you think too much of yourself.

You've really got some issues. And you don't have peace. Because if you're only going to have peace when you're the center, you're not the center, even if you think you are, and you're never going to have peace.

Now, the greatness of the throne is also seen in the footstool. I'm just going to read some text to you. Isaiah 66, verse 1, thus says the Lord, Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool.

How big is His throne? Well, relatively, a throne is much bigger than the footstool. And earth is the footstool. Now, of course, we're talking figuratively, but it gives you an idea of what we're talking about.

The place He puts His foot is bigger than the entire world. And the idea may not just be earth, but the universe itself is His footstool. How big is the universe? Really, really big.

Sometimes I like to read some things on physics and things like that and on how distances turn upon themselves and infinity and all the other things. Let me just say to you, it's really, really big. Psalms 99.5, Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool, holy as He.

Let me just say this, you'll either worship at His footstool now, or you will bow at His footstool in judgment later. You say that's a threat. Yeah, it is.

It's a threat. Just like if I say, hey, you know, see the sign right there? It says, Rottweiler, you walk through those doors, He's going to bite you. It's not being mean, it's just a reality.

There are realities. You see, again, I don't want to get philosophical, but we live in this age of relativism, you know? It is if I think it is. That just doesn't work out mathematically, practically.

I can walk down the middle of the road, see a 20 ton logging truck come at me, stand my ground and say, it's not bigger than me. It's not going to hurt me. It's going to hurt me.

Whether I believe it or not. And that's why a more sensible person says, get out of the road. And if you don't get out of the road, they call the police and they take you away because you're not right in your head.

There are realities, and they're harmful, hurtful, dangerous, terrifying, and you need to be told about them. And I wouldn't be a minister of the Gospel if I stood here like so many cowards and tried to entertain you with my words and please your flesh so you walk out. Because what I'm doing is I'm not showing love to you by keeping these things from you.

I'm showing love for self. Just like a parent who never disciplines their child. The reason why they never discipline their child is because they love themselves, not because they love their children.

They want their children to think they're great. Now, let's look at the greatness of the one who sits there. But before we do, just look at this.

It says, I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it. Now notice, He brings the throne in before He brings Him. There's a few things that I want to point out here.

One of them is just a kind of consecutive argument. The other one would be drawn from Hebrew thought. And the first is, He wants you to know that whoever He's going to introduce, He wants you to know from the very beginning that He's on the throne and you're not.

He wants you to know who He is. You see, that's a problem. I could tone this down.

I could redefine God and I'd be on every talk show in America and they'd really like me. You see that? But when I define Him biblically, that's when the problem starts. They go, no, no, no, hold it, hold it.

He's King. He's Lord. That's when all the problems start.

And that's what John's wanting you to understand. Another thing is, the Jew, and this is what's so wonderful, this was created not only through the law, but the many disciplines, even the Assyrian captivity. Everything else drove the Jew to realize one thing.

Be careful about your attitudes and your speech with regard to God. As a matter of fact, it'd be better not even to mention His name. So if you're going to talk about God, say throne or heaven.

Such a reverence for His name that they would refer to something associated with God rather than mention God's name for fear that they would do it in a way that didn't show reverence as is commanded by the law. I think we're too trite in our speech, don't you? You and Jesus ain't got your own thing going. You really don't.

Let's go on. The one who sits there, let me just give you some names. He's the I Am.

The Alpha and Omega. The Ancient of Days. The Eternal God.

The Invisible God. The Blessed God. The Mighty One.

The Holy One. The Righteous God. The God of Gods.

The King of Kings. The Lord of Lords. The Possessor of Heaven and Earth.

The Blessed and Only Sovereign. The Lawgiver. The Judge of all the Earth.

And, we'll conclude it with this, He who is to be feared. What's the beginning of knowledge? The beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord. Let me say something, and I'm saying it purposely.

If you don't fear God, you're stupid. You're just stupid. I know some of your children are going to come home after church and say, I thought we weren't supposed to use that word.

But, you see, when I say that, isn't it amazing? You can hear someone talk about, well, fearing God really doesn't mean fearing God. You don't have to fear God. And you're not offended.

But if I turn the tables and say if you don't fear God, you're stupid, you get mad. Isn't it more zealous for your own name and your own opinion of yourself than you are of God? I thought that was amazing. Whenever I've taught on the classical biblical and reformed doctrine of the centrality of God, especially using a quote from John Owen about the centrality of God, that He's the center of all things, I hear people get mad.

I mean, they get mad. But if I trap them, if before I teach that, I talk about how important you are to God and how God's affections are set on you and how God's always thinking about you, you're like, yeah! But if I then turn it around and say God's the center of everything and all our affections should be set on Him, I don't like that. Isn't that amazing? Doesn't that tell us something about who we really are? Listen to Nebuchadnezzar.

I don't think anyone here will probably be as famous as him, won't be as wealthy as him, and hopefully you won't have as much power as him. He was a tyrant of tyrants over all the known world. No one had more power.

And this is what he said after God dealt with him. Now when God deals with someone, I want you to realize something. It's kind of like what I've heard my wife say to my children.

She says, now we can do this the easy way, or we can do this the easy way, because for me, both ways are easy. So when we talk about God dealing with Nebuchadnezzar, we are not talking about God said I'm

going to come down and bear my arm. He didn't even have to bear his finger.

He willed it. This is what Nebuchadnezzar said after God dealt with him. But the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever.

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth.

And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, what have You done? He sets His hand on the table and no one can pry it off. He raises His hand and swears by His own name and no one can lash His hand to the table. He does whatever He chooses to do in the heavens and the earth and under the earth, which is a biblical way of saying absolutely everywhere.

It's His. It really, really is, my friend. Now, it says it is white.

It is a great white throne. The idea here most probably is representing the moral purity, the moral excellence, unmingled purity, and unwavering... Now listen to my words. Unwavering, vindictive justice.

Unwavering. On the day that He judges the world, there won't be any battle between compassion, mercy, and justice. There won't be any going on.

That's already done with. And is justice a common word that is used? In this case, there is a justice that falls upon the believer that is reconciliatory, that is redemptive. It is ordered to bring the believer back to their senses that they might walk correctly, that they might be healed.

But then there is a punitive justice that has nothing to do with correcting anyone. It is a vindictive justice to vindicate what is right. And it falls like a hammer.

And our judicial system has forgotten this aspect of justice, and that's one of the reasons why you have such chaos today. But God hasn't forgotten it. He was the author of it.

It comes forth from His Person. He will judge the world with vengeance. Now that's not some 1950s preacher with his hair slicked back screaming at you.

It's all throughout the Scriptures. And if you don't believe it, I just want you to know you don't believe the Scriptures. Because it's there.

It's all over. I will vindicate myself. I will get vengeance.

Read Nahum. Read the other prophets around him. You see it quite clearly.

Vindictive justice. Now, I also believe that what we're seeing here is this idea of burning, blinding. Isaiah says continual burnings.

The holiness of God. The righteousness of God. You live in a cave.

You go to Mammoth Cave and there are these fish that seem to have lost their eyes because it's pitch dark there. But you keep a man even concealed for a few days and then bring him out into the light and it's blinding. You see, we're kind of like those fish.

We've lived in moral darkness all our life. Even Christians who have been regenerated and their minds have been illuminated, there is still a sense of darkness, of paleness, of shades of gray. But here, there's nothing of that.

No shadow. No shadow. Blinding, pristine justice.

And that's what you need to think about also when you think about hell. Most people's idea of the Ten Commandments comes from Cecil B. DeMille's version of the Ten Commandments. You know, Charlton Heston and Moses are the ones that recently came out.

Exodus, which was absolutely absurd. When Hollywood seems to want to make a movie about the Bible, they seem to look at the Bible, do everything the very opposite of what's actually taught, and then call it a remake of Scripture. Most people have ideas like that.

Most people have ideas of hell based upon Dante. I'm sure most of you, all of you, read in high school Dante's Inferno and have ideas that hell is some sort of kind of twisted, malignant, gleeful torture of human beings. It's not.

You say, well, that's good. It's worse. And you may not understand this, so I should not have made that statement this way because it requires some background to make your mind grasp the concept.

The idea is it is perfect justice. It is perfect, pure, blinding justice in which you are paid back perfectly. Now, do you see why when these preachers refuse to talk about sin, how they're really doing an injustice? I want you to think again.

I use this illustration all the time. Adam and Eve sinned one time. They bit a fruit.

The entire universe was thrown into corruption and judgment. You? You can't even count. See, we don't see sin as sin.

Oh, it's a little lie. Not before a holy God. In Daniel 7-9, I kept looking until thrones were set up.

In the Hebrew, literally, I kept looking until thrones were thrown. It was quick. It was like that.

And that's the way this will be. In a moment's time, you're sitting here scoffing at some ludicrous preacher who actually believes the Bible. And the next moment, you're standing before the judgment throne of Christ.

The thrones are thrown and set up. And the Ancient of Days took His seat. His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool.

His throne was ablaze with flames. Its wheels were a burning fire. Now, for the one that's been redeemed through the blood of Christ to know that God is that holy, it's wonderful.

For the sinner, it's terrifying. Remember this. Just remember this.

The corrupt mafioso in Sicily, he is not afraid of the corrupt judge. They're friends. He's terrified of the righteous one.

If there was a judge sitting on the throne that was like you, you wouldn't be terrified. But he's not. He's holy.

Like I told a group of students when I was giving a lecture and they were just really antagonistic. The most terrifying thing I could ever tell you students is this. God is good.

And they say, well, what's so terrifying about that? You're not good. So what does a good God do with someone like you? Now, let's go on. I know we're not even... I don't even think we're going to get past the first verse, are we? I want to show you something about this throne that is not often pointed out.

And it's... You know, sometimes in theology we try... When we know that we can't define something, science does this too. When we know we can't define something with regard to what it is, then we start drawing other parameters of what it's not. And that is helpful.

We look at what's there. And sometimes it's very helpful to look at what's not there. So we have two appearances of a throne.

One is in Revelation 4 and the other one is here. And there are other things mingled in, but I want to take those two ideas and I want to set them before you. Now, we don't have time to read through chapter 4 and 5, but I'm just going to give you some of the differences between those two thrones.

Between the one you see in 4 and the one you see here in 20. Here in 20, there is nothing said about God's appearance. Nothing.

Now, in chapter 4, there is. You see a revelation of God. It's speaking, of course, figuratively, but there's this beautiful revelation of this majestic Person seated upon the throne.

But here in judgment, there is no description of His appearance. And I've written this, He who once revealed Himself to all men is now hiding Himself from them in judgment. You get there and you show up and there's the throne.

It really is real? The preacher wasn't that crazy? Okay, I am ready to believe. No. No, it's over.

The revelation is withdrawn. To whom much is given, much is required. As you measure it, Jesus said, the revelation that's given to you, as you measure it, as you seek it out, more will be given.

Now, it's judgment. That's gone. The One who's there now, you don't know Him.

And you won't, except in judgment. Another thing. In chapter 4, there's a rainbow.

Now, I know that symbol's been hijacked in the cruelest form, but that rainbow is a sign of God's covenant, of God's promise. It is a sign of God's salvation for sinful men. Not a banner by which men can continue in their perverted sin.

It is a symbol of His faithfulness to those who believe. It is a symbol of hope. I will not destroy the earth again that way.

It is a symbol of so many redemptive things, and it's found there in Revelation 4. But when you get to Revelation 20, the rainbow is gone. Why? There's no longer any promise or hope of salvation extended to anyone. It's over.

I know that it's so hard to get our minds around why. Because even in an academic setting, I find it amazing. A student has been just totally negligent.

Totally. All semester. Hasn't done his work.

Hasn't attempted anything. He's going to flunk the class, and he comes up and he says, yeah, but Prof, help me here. Give me some extra work to do.

And because our educational system is so putrid, the professor says, yeah, here's some extra work. We've got to get you passed. That's not going to happen.

There's no extra work. There's nothing else you can do. It's over.

It's gone. Yeah, but... No! And that's why when you set rules in your own home, and you do not act upon them, all you're doing is preparing children for judgment day. That's all.

Don't do that. And they continue doing it. Don't do it.

They continue. Don't. And they continue.

All they've learned is authority. There's always a way around it. I can keep going.

I know when to cut it off. There's going to be a day when you can't. It doesn't matter.

It's over. It's over. Also, in chapter 4, there were all these thrones that were placed around the throne.

Elders, whoever they are. We have thrones. But now those thrones are gone.

Everything has been withdrawn. It's like even these mighty elders, whoever they are, they've taken up their thrones and they've walked off the stage in fear. There's no one there.

It's almost as though God's saying, now, it's between you and Me. No one else here. Now, be negligent.

Now, rail against Me. Now, defy My Word. Do you see that? Here's another thing that I want you to see.

On that day, you stand there alone, without lawyer, without advocate. No one, as the old Puritans would say, no one shall show thee pity. No one.

Not father. Not mother. Not brother.

Not child. No one will advance your cause. As a matter of fact, when you take your first step into hell, the last thing you will hear is all of creation worshiping God because He has rid the earth of you.

You say, how can that be? How can it be? Let me share with you something. The Bible teaches that all men are radically depraved. In the same way that Hitler was radically depraved.

That he was not some phenom. He was literally us. Now, the reason you're not that is by God's grace, He restrains your evil.

We hear all the time of even children that will murder their own parents. Plot and murder their own parents. Do you think that child is just exceptionally wicked? And that your children aren't like that? Or you weren't like that when you were a child? There is a thing called the restraining grace of God that restrains the evil of men so that history can continue, so that God's redemptive work can go on and He can be glorified in it and men can be saved.

But on the day of judgment, you must understand that all the common grace of God that kept you from being the most vile monster on this planet will be withdrawn. And you will stand there as you are now. With no grace restraining your evil.

Nothing making you lovely. Nothing making you lovable. You are you.

All the time you've been pretending to have virtue and merit and prancing around thinking you can earn your own salvation. If someone said you were bad, you would get mad at them for not knowing that every virtue, every restraint from evil has only been because God's grace made you able to do that. But now he's pulled back.

And there's nothing left there but a monster. Do you see now? Here's something you need to understand. Many of you have never even heard any of this.

And you think, well, who does he think he is saying these things I've never heard? Herein lies the problem. If I were to simply say, well, I'm saying this because it's Scripture, you could say, I hope it's on the tip of your tongue. Well, that's your interpretation.

And obviously you're wrong if the great majority of people today are saying just the opposite. But here's where validation of church history comes in. If you look back throughout all of church history at those men and women who truly embraced the Scriptures and suffered and died for their faith, these were the very things they all said.

Even all the men that so many people... Well, Charles Spurgeon, the greatest preacher who ever lived, he believed this. Martin Lloyd Jones, the Puritans, the Reformers, the early Baptists, the early Methodists, the early Presbyterians, the early Congregationalists. This was common food in the pulpit every Sunday.

And now it's like, from where do you come with this strange teaching? When you look at Israel and they're worshipping in the temple, supposedly, walk out of the temple and then go worship Baal and deny everything the Scripture says, and you go, how can they live in such contradiction? Then look at contemporary Christianity and be very, very careful how you judge Israel. And when you look at Israel, how could these prophets rise up just affirming the people and all their sin and pretending like God was just some old grandpa that would delight to see them no matter how dirty they are? Where does that come from? Same thing you see today, don't you? So what I'm telling you is not some invention of my own. And it doesn't come, I wish it did, from the brilliance of my own interpretation.

Although I do interpret the Scripture that way, I want you to know that most of this I learned from 2,000 years of church history also. And the way men of God and women of God have always approached the text. Now, also know, there's no angelic choirs with joyful singing.

Not one voice of gladness. Not one voice of gladness. Not one sound.

In chapter 4, there's worship. Now, all of heaven is silent. I remember one time, maybe it's because... I don't know.

I always looked at things differently. One of my teachers, I think it was the third grade, Miss Carson, I believe. She wanted us to draw sounds.

Some sort of academic challenge. Draw a sound. And so I was sitting there going, well, what could I do that would be unique? I mean, bird sound, that's not unique.

And so I thought, I go, okay. And so I took my crayon. I don't use those anymore.

I took my crayon, and I went straight up the paper like that and made the sharpest point. Came down like that and made the sharpest point. And I made sure the emphasis was on this dagger-like point.

And she said, what is that sound, Paul? And I said, silence. Silence. Silence.

There is sometimes nothing more cutting and sharp than silence. Terrifying. Especially for people in our age of media and noise.

Silence. No singing. Nothing.

Also, there is no lightning and thunder in chapter 20. But there's lightning and thunder in chapter 4. And you say, well, that's a good thing, isn't it? No. No, it's not.

Why? Well, you see, you're misunderstanding lightning and thunder. Especially when you look at the giving of the law and you see lightning and thunder. You see, those were given in order to make the event solemn.

In order to warn. In order to say, listen! If there was a train that somehow derailed from over there and was running towards these windows right now, I wouldn't go, oh look, a train. But I would thunder forth a train! The lightning and the thunder.

These manifestations of God. These great epiphanies are warnings that He really is holy. We really are not.

And there is a big problem here. And you need to listen. If there is a small cloudburst or rain shower, you may stand out on your porch and just bask in the beauty of it.

But if there is thunder and lightning and it seems that the sky is going to be cracked apart, you run inside! And you pay attention to the news. So the fact that there's now no lightning and thunder means that it's been pulled back. God's done with you.

No more warning. When I'm teaching my children from the book of Proverbs, something that is a life practice in our home, I'm always telling them because it's there in the text. Children know this.

How many children, especially when they leave the home, no longer heed the warnings of wisdom? And I said, there will be sometimes when you do not heed a warning of wisdom and your father can come to the rescue and correct it. But there can come a time when you do not heed the warning and your father, who would move heaven and earth if he could, is going to have to say to you, I cannot help you. A lot of times I'll use the illustration and say, you go out of my house, you decide that you want to go party or something and you get drunk and you get in a car and you kill five people coming home from church as you're driving wildly on a Sunday evening.

And then you call me from the police station. I will come. I will be there.

I will suffer with you. You are my son. But when the law comes down, Daddy, help me fix this.

I can not. And on that day, no one will fix it. No one.

Because there's only one who can fix it and you've already denied Him. That's the Son of God, the Redeemer, the Advocate. Also, in chapter 4, there are seven torches representing the Spirit of the living God.

Notice that here in chapter 20, there's no Holy Spirit. Who is the only one who can woo a man and a woman or a child to come to Christ? Who is the only one who can reveal truth? Who is the only one who can regenerate the heart? Who is the only one to reject His wooing, His message, His call? There is no other way. And on that day, He will not be calling anyone.

Also notice that in the other throne, there were angels. Here, there is no angel. Isaiah recognized he was dirty.

Woe is me. I'm undone. I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.

And an angel goes and takes a hot coal from the altar with tongs. So you know, the angel's not touching it. It's got to be pretty hot.

Places it on Isaiah's lips as a symbol of purification. There'd be no angel flying to aid you in purification. All have pulled back from you.

No one wants anything to do with you now. You're alone. You're alone.

Also, know this. There's no rainbow. There's no angel bringing coals of purity.

Do you want to know why? There's no Lamb. In chapter 4, there's a Lamb as though He had been slain. He's sitting on a throne.

It's over. There's no Gospel left. There's no Gospel for you.

There's no Gospel message. There's no angel flying, orbiting around this great Colosseum screaming out, still believe. There's time.

There's not. It's over. It's over.

And there is no trumpet voice saying, draw near. In chapter 4, verse 1, He tells John, draw near. It's not there now.

There is no drawing near. Instead, there is this. Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity.

And then taking from Hebrews 10, I can say this. You trampled underfoot the Son of God. You regarded as unclean His blood and insulted His Spirit of grace.

There no longer remains any hope for you, but only a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of fire which will consume you as God's adversary. Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord. It's in the Bible.

It's in the Bible. I think we probably need to stop there. We didn't get through verse 1, but there are some things that we saw.

If it were in me, if you were able to endure it, I'd preach the next five hours because this text is so important. But know this. Especially, listen to me.

If you want to walk out of here saying, well, that was weird. If you want to walk out of here saying, well, gosh, it felt like I was back in the 1950's or something. Or who does that guy think I am? I think he is.

Let me talk to you for just a second about something. It's called patronizing and intellectual integrity. Now, if you want to go toe-to-toe academically, we can.

But I want to talk about patronizing and intellectual integrity. If you're here today and you say, I'm an atheist. This is the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

I'm an agnostic. This is absolutely insane. I disagree with you, but you've held your course in logic.

You do not believe that this Bible is anything other than fiction. And you're at least walking to some degree according to what you claim to be your conviction. And that is respectable intellectually, even though I believe you're wrong.

You're consistent. But what I am coming to grips with more and more as I travel around this country, around the world, is this. I'm a Christian.

Who you say I'm not a Christian? I'm a Christian. I don't believe that. I don't believe that.

Well then, what do you believe? And then you say, well, I believe this, this, this. And then I'll do like I did one time in a big riot that broke out on the West Virginia campus. This hate preacher was there preaching and these people were screaming at him and this girl kept making the same statement over and over about Lilith and all that type of Gnostic doctrine and things like that.

So I screamed out to get everybody's attention. Show me your primary documents. Everybody just stopped and turned around.

What? You made a statement about Lilith. Show me your primary documents. From where are you drawing this? You making it up? Because if you're making it up, then you're standing on the same grounds I am.

You see, here's the problem. I could sit here and I could argue for the validity. I could seek to vindicate the Scriptures.

I could do it in a theological manner, a presuppositional manner. I could even do some evidence to debunk maybe some of your ideas. But here's the issue.

If you sit there and say, I'm a Christian but I don't believe any of that, then here are your possibilities. If you are a Christian, then you indeed love even the worst of sinners. That would be me because I'm twisting the Scriptures and misinterpreting them.

So you need to come to me and explain to me why this is a wrong interpretation if you are a Christian. If you say, well, it's not so much your interpretation is I just don't believe that part. Now here's the question.

It's a big question. As a matter of fact, it is a question that changes the entire world. At least your world view.

So now, the Bible is not your authority. Who's the authority? You are. Now here's the question.

From where did you learn Christianity? The Bible. But if you set yourself up over the Bible, then there's a problem. You prove invalid everything else.

See, you can't pick and choose. The same Jesus who said, for God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. That is a part of Scripture.

And if you say, well, this other part of Scripture I don't believe, then you've set yourself up of Scripture, you've become the authority for your faith, and your opinion is no better than anyone else's. So do everybody a favor and stop calling yourself a Christian. Because it's a matter of authority.

Now, another thing, because I've been around a long time, you walk out and go, that's just his idea. Okay, if it is my idea and it's wrong, perverse, and twisted, then you owe it to me to come up and interpret this text. To take me by the hand and say, Sir, you're sincere.

You seem to have studied, but you're so wrong. I say, show me. Please.

But don't walk out of here with some smug intellectualism that you somehow don't embrace any of this because your intellect and your culture is so refined. Because actually, you're being absurd. Throw your Christianity away and then I will allow you to do that.

But I'm not going to allow you to say, I'm a Christian, I believe in Jesus, but all that stuff he said today was just wrong. So you can't do that. Because if you still remain positive toward me, you're only patronizing me.

And in yourself, you're contradicting. I'm not trying to be brash. I just kind of know the way people think.

Not because I read their minds, but because when I preach on something like this, this is what usually comes. Don't listen to that. You see? Be very careful.

But if God has used this to stir up something in your heart, then I would tell you, run to Christ. Run to Christ. Not to this church.

Not to a preacher. Run to Christ. Because He suffered the divine, the vindictive justice in your place and paid it all.

And we are saved by faith. It is a thing of grace. No man can boast except he who boasts, boasts in this, in the Lord.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Word. And that it might, Lord, that it might reap.

That Your people might be helped. That sinners might be saved. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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